



## TIM TWEEDY'S PERSONAL STORY SO FAR (PARTS 1 & 2)

**Tim Tweedy is a new WIRED volunteer. He will be writing regular features for WIRED, the first of which is a series documenting his personal experience of addiction. Tim also writes a lot of poetry: read some of his work here.**

Addiction, I have found out, has no boundaries. It recognises no difference in class, status or up-bringing. It chews you up and spits you out when it's finished and cares for nothing and nobody. It has no moral code of ethics and offers no respite. It's important for me to acknowledge that my addiction can come back and destroy me at any time, whenever I want it to.

The thing is, drugs didn't finish with me, I finished with drugs. I now have a choice, a freedom to experience my life in a way which was alien to me for so many years, and today that feels good. It's important to say that is how it is today; it may not be the way it is tomorrow. The best thing I can do is to live this day, this moment, and tomorrow will take care of itself.

I am the youngest of three children, who were bought up and cared for in my early years by my Dad only. My mum left when I was three years old and I have only seen her twice in the 38 years in-between then and now. Well, at least the times I remember. I have been told that she was about sporadically for the first few years after leaving, but I have no memory of that.

It is only recently that I have begun to ask questions relating to her leaving, as I have come to understand that I need to know the facts. It has become quite clear that she was not very well and spent a period in hospital with what nowadays could be deemed as a form of depression. I don't know. I am no doctor so it's purely speculation on my part, but the facts seem to lead me to this diagnosis.

Until recently, I had no time for her because of my suppressed feelings of hurt, pain and rejection. It is only by working through all my feelings and adding in the actual facts from the time that I can start to understand her decision. In a lot of ways I can now see it as quite a selfless act, which could have easily been driven by the needs of her three children, and not her own feelings and wishes. Again, it's all conjecture but I have some compassion and empathy for her today and that can only be a healing thing for me and maybe the basis of a possible relationship with her in the future.

My dad was a policeman who managed to juggle looking after a demanding and tiring home environment with a career, for over thirty years. When he was not at home, we were in the main part looked after by a variety of 'house-keepers'. Modern day equivalents would be 'nannies'. There were a fair number who came

and went, and to this day I cannot consciously remember any of them or how I was around them. I do know that I spent as much time as I could out of the house playing football by myself or with my friends. When I look back, I know that was when I was my happiest then. It didn't matter if I was on my own playing, I was just happier playing outside. But that may just be the case for all kids.

My brother and sister were very protective towards me and always looked out for me. My sister even chased after an older boy with a cricket bat when she thought he had threatened me. She has mellowed since then, but its best to keep any sporting equipment well hidden if she seems agitated!

One thing I do know is that throughout my life she has been an almost constant source of love, support and care for me. I could not have achieved even half of what I have without her. I so am grateful that she has always stood by me whilst others have run for cover. Without her I would be lost.

My brother is, well, my big bro. He is a gentle giant, who during his teenage years was a physically intimidating figure if crossed. But it was all a big bluff really. He is a caring and loving father of two now who will do whatever he can to keep his family safe and provided for. I just wish he would slow down and rest because I love and care for him unconditionally and am worried about him. But he is my big brother and in a part of my mind, thus invincible and sits on a pedestal.

When I was about ten, my Dad met a woman who later became my Step-mum. With all the new dynamics this brought, there were initial problems. I myself was confused and felt rejected by my Dad. There was now someone else who was taking up my Dad's time and also his love. Who was she to do this? Why was he doing this to me? Did he not care anymore? I remember telling a family friend that he did not love me anymore. I felt isolated and abandoned again. It was from this moment that I started to isolate myself.

My teenage years were a time of feeling very remote and isolated from my family as a whole. I was very much into my sports, football, rugby and cricket. Most weekends and spare time were taken up playing whichever one was in season at the time. At home, I spent a lot of time in my bedroom, doing homework or reading. I was aware that I felt very lonely and failed to understand those close to me. They, in turn, seemed to fail to understand me totally.

It was around this time, when I was about 16 or 17 that I started drinking. Not heavily, but enough for me to be aware of the effects it could have in suppressing these feelings. We also had a dog, a Staffordshire bull terrier called Pepper, whom I loved dearly. I used to have dinner and do my homework and then take him out for a walk about 8.30 p.m., even during the cold winter months. He got to know this and would always be at the bottom of the stairs waiting for me. I used to hear him whinging and whining for me if he felt I was taking too long to come down.

It was at this time, when I was about 17 that I started to smoke cannabis when I was walking him. I don't know where I got it from or why it started really, it just felt good to do it. It took me out of myself and allowed me to drift into a place where I felt at peace and in contact with something that was far better than the reality of my life at that time. This was obviously the beginning of my drug using and it felt good as it allowed me to exist differently and in a way which seemed more acceptable to me.

It may also have played a large part in me rebelling against all that seemed constricting in my life at that time. I became aware that everything was not as I had originally perceived it to be. The values and conditions installed by my controlled and protective up-bringing stifled me and I felt the need to question it all. I began to explore different ways of living and wanted to know why I had to do the certain things that were expected of me. I did not want to do them without question. I felt trapped by my surroundings and started to write about political and social issues, as well as the beginnings of some poetry. This did not go down well at home. I was accused of being a Communist and a real 'red'. This fuelled my desire to upset things even more and it became a vicious circle with me igniting fires for fun.

It ended up with me leaving home just before my 'A' Levels and thus severely affected my eventual grades. It also damaged my relationship with my dad for many years. I am aware that I still hold some real resentment around the things which happened then and the things that were said. But just saying this can only help in me overcoming them.

The next seven years or so were spent doing a variety of jobs, engaging in relationships which were doomed from the start, and playing football and cricket. I played both to a relatively good standard and achieved one of my lifetime aims of being paid to play football. To me, this was something to be proud and boastful about.

I was drinking socially at this time but not in any way heavily. It's strange, but alcohol has never really been the one to light my candle, even during the heavy years of my drug using which was to follow. It just did not 'hit the spot' or provide whatever it was that I was looking for. I used to go out regularly to clubs, especially at the weekends, with mates from both sports but I found that it still did not free me from the inhibitions that encapsulated my life.

Then, at the age of 25, I found amphetamines. Boy, I loved speed, even writing about it now it makes me 'buzz'. It became my reason for living for quite a few years, although it took a while for me to really appreciate what it could do for me on a social level. It made me feel alive and allowed me to experience a reality which surpassed anything else I had done before. I was introduced to it by a friend who worked long and unsociable hours, as I was at the time. I was working in Event Management and had a very responsible job looking after many clients and high profile events. However, the long hours started to take their toll on me. I was exhausted and unable to cope with the ever-increasing demands being placed on

me. I didn't know then, how to ask for help. At that time it seemed as though I would be admitting defeat and that I had failed. For me, this was not an option.

Speed helped me to get on and do what I needed to do. It allowed me to be sociable and relate on a personal level to other people's needs. I was unaware of my own needs and at that time helping others took me away from looking at myself. That appealed to me. Examining my life would be too scary and who knows what I would find.

So, to start with, I dabbled with speed. I could take it or leave it and only took it in small amounts. I would also go for long periods in between using. But, I was aware of what it could do for me, especially with women. It made me feel like I was the King of Comedy and I could hold their attention in a way which I could never have done otherwise. It allowed me to overcome the shyness which hindered my emotional development and helped me to get over the initial fears of meeting anyone for the first time. It seemed to know me on a level which I never knew existed and it felt special, attractive and personable.

I can't really put my finger on a point when this 'dabbling' moved into full scale addiction and whether this was a physical or physiological condition. I was in a relationship around the time, though which I can now see was unhealthy. I loved her with an intensity which ended up being all-consuming and bordered on obsessional. To me, she was a goddess in every way, gorgeous.

It was destructive. I was eaten up by jealousy and feelings of low self-worth and she played on this continuously. It was a game for her and provided her with what she needed at the time. It was a relationship which ended up being totally devastating for both of us. My head could not cope with seeing my heart being smashed and torn apart so, without her knowing, I let speed join the fun. It made everything so much worse.

So, at the age of about 26 or 27, I started using all the time, at work and at home. I detached myself from talking to her and lived solely 'in my head'; I was lost in my own thoughts. I had been writing poems regularly before this time, but they became more frequent and so depressing in content. They were full of self-pity, anger, resentment and negativity towards both me and everyone close to me. I withdrew into a world where I could not be hurt by others. It didn't help me though, as I was beating myself up continuously.

This was when my using started to become totally psychotic in its nature. I felt like I was mad and this thought has stayed with me, even to this very day. It was not pretty and it hurts to remember exactly how it was, now as I write this. I was really ill and gripped by the hands of an illness I have only recently come to terms with.

Yet despite this, and even knowing what it did to me, I still really miss speed at times. See, I told you that I was still mad.

The psychotic world that I inhabited is not a place I would recommend to anyone, even those who I may look upon as enemies. I would not wish that on anyone. The things that went on in my head and the places I went to are not pretty, however they are dressed up. I trusted no one and was suspicious of everything and everybody, except myself. I was, in my own mind, the only person who knew what was right and who was being 'real'.

I was living in a drug-induced world. I believed all that my head was telling me and wanted to impart all my new found wisdom to everybody else. It was a matter of me wanting to say, " Yeah, I hear what your saying (I hadn't), but listen to me, I am going to tell you what the truth is". I would then 'put people in their place' and tell them the way it actually was, and then send them on their way. I didn't even want their thanks, or for them to acknowledge me. Looking back, I realise now that people were just humouring me and were totally aware that whatever they said, I was not going to listen. Who was right? Safe to say now, they were.

However, although I can say all of that, describing how low it took me, I did have a really good six months on speed at the start. What a great summer that was. It was really at the start of my using and thus the effects I have spoken about above had not really kicked in. My girlfriend at that time was in the USA and I was living with a friend about 1,000 yards from the most happening bar in the area. For me, it was party time. I used to wake up on a Friday morning and the next time I would see my bed was Monday night. The time in-between was spent working, going to a bar or club and playing football or cricket. I spent the whole of that summer wearing a bandana when I wasn't at work and grew a 'goatee' beard to enhance my appearance. It didn't.

My friend and I had a great relationship at that time and we were good for each other. He hated drugs, which meant he didn't want any of mine and he attracted the women for me to talk to and try and impress. Although speed helped cure my shyness it did not mean I wanted a woman. I told them all about my girlfriend being away and this seemed to draw them in even more because I was not out for the normal thing guys wanted. I just wanted to go out and party and wanted the people around me to have a laugh as well. I was in heaven and to say I abused myself would be stating the obvious. By the time my girlfriend came back six months later I had lost a fair bit of weight but still thought that I looked the 'dogs'. Who was I fooling?

When she came back things had changed for the worse between us. During the time she was away, I had spent hours writing long, very long, letters to her and a fortune ringing her from a phone box in the local high street. My mate, who I lived with, would not let me use the house phone as he disliked her with a passion and used to tell me constantly when he saw me writing these letters, "Do you really think she is being faithful over there". I just thought he was biased and wanted her gone, but I should have listened because something had obviously happened when she was out there.

When she came back she was very distant and within days she told me she had to go back as she had to be a witness in a court case. I believed her for some reason, but I also had another reason not to be too bothered. Whilst she went off to the US for 'God knows how long', I went to Australia for six weeks over a Christmas and New Year period!

An Aussie friend of mine was going back home for Christmas and had asked me if I wanted to go. I had always said no because of my girlfriend coming back but now I could say yes. So I booked my flight and within three weeks I was off on a plane down under. There was no trouble getting time off from work as I had accumulated so much time owing through the long hours I had worked - when I needed no assistant except speed.

I loved Australia. Man, I really did (I have been back twice since). If I knew then, what I know now, I would never have come back from there that first time. I had the best six weeks of my life and it was totally drug-free. That should tell me something I suppose. I did drink over there, way more than I have ever done before. So really it was not drug-free, but you know what I mean.

I did things I never thought I would ever do (fishing in the middle of the Indian Ocean, crabbing at dawn, prawning in a river at the end of the street), as well as soaking up the sun and watching the sun set over the Indian Ocean with a cold beer in my hand. I met so many people and was looked after so well by all those I met. I got up late and came home early, with the milkman, literally! The person I stayed with was a milkman! I owe him, his mum and dad so much; they treated me like a King. They cared for me unconditionally and only writing this now do I fully realise that. I can recognise this now as a few years later I treated them dreadfully when they were in England when I was in the midst of my cocaine days.

(To be continued)

**In the first part of his personal story, Tim described his childhood and experimentation with drugs. Here he describes his descent into a chaotic and damaging relationship with speed, and the development of his addiction.**

On the way back from Australia, I stopped off in Hong Kong. I was meant to stay for four days, but I was keen to get home as I missed my big friend - speed. I phoned home and told them I had managed to change my flight and would be coming back the next day. I was surprised when I was told my girlfriend was back in the UK already. I spoke to her on the phone and she met me at the airport the following morning.

So many things were going through my head, 'Why is she back? What's happened with her in the US?' Something didn't quite fit and when she told me she loved me and wanted to move in with me, the alarm bells started ringing in my head - I wanted to say, 'Look, I may look and act it at times, but I'm not totally stupid'.

But, as was to become the norm for many years that followed, I may have said it in my head but that's where it stayed. I smiled and said that would be great and as luck would have it we moved into a flat on site where I worked. The scene was set for chaos on a very large scale. My mind was in overdrive; the voices inside screaming at me to say something to my girlfriend about her cheating but instead I reverted into character and went and hid in gram after gram of speed. Unfortunately, as happens with any addiction, it didn't paper over the cracks, it just widened them and they ended up affecting everything.

Also, there was an added complication, she had an eating disorder. It's not a good mix in a relationship; an addict and an anorexic and is certainly not something I'd recommend. Both lives contain lies, secrets and heaps of denial which only lead to one end: disaster.

For a while, things probably looked OK on the surface. We started to get stuff for the flat and spent a lot of time with each other but there was a major component missing - honesty. It's hard writing this now and remembering it all as it happened and evolved over time. My stomach is in knots and I feel extremely sad and helpless for those two people. I want to reach back in time and hold them and speak to them both as I care for them on a level I should have been able to at the time but simply couldn't. They were both in the grip of illnesses which nearly killed them both. How they managed to survive and live on is beyond me. When I think about it, I now know that there is a God - who else was looking after them?

As my home-life became worse and things started to disintegrate, I began to spend more and more time at work, which was about a mile away from the flat. A lot of the time I was not even meant to be there but just stayed on working and doing extra hours as it was safe and I was in control and beyond the realms of real feelings. It's funny, but on speed I truly was a functioning addict when at work. My job never suffered; on the contrary, I was well respected and clients seemed to adore and love me and continued to hire me. Of course, being an addict it just fueled my ego and I began to feel invincible and craved the power I seemed to have captured. My girlfriend meanwhile was raging and I was at the centre of the storm whenever I did manage to be at home. She was not working and even on my days off when we could have been together, I used to either go into work or go out on my own. I was fanning the flames and things were just about to go up in smoke – big time.

*\*\*\* It's taken me a long time to get back to this story from when I first started writing Part two. It hurt too much to write about it, as if I was betraying a trust and betraying myself. It hurts because I put that girl through so much and I only understand that now. She did not deserve it... It may not help, but this is a personal note, if you ever read this, I mean it when I say I'm sorry. I really do\*\*\**

Eventually, she had enough and basically gave me an ultimatum: sort yourself out or I am off. I was in the grip of my using so I choose the latter. She went. I came home from work one day, and my car and most of the good stuff from the flat we shared was gone. It took two weeks to get my car back, but I never got the

possessions or her back. It's all a bit surreal looking back; as if it was another person doing all that crap and treating people like I did. Anyway, at the time I could see one good thing come from it - I could now use speed at home instead of having to be at work all the time.

I still worked too much though and went in when I shouldn't have. I used to go in when everyone had gone home; it was a big venue with huge open spaces which were extremely dark and somewhat scary at night but from midnight until three or four in the morning I used to roam the whole place doing work. It's even stranger to think about it now as I always used to be so scared of the dark when I was a kid yet there I was, strolling around thinking I was untouchable in the pitch black not knowing what was hiding behind the next corner - or more to the point, not really caring. If I got hit on the head or something I wasn't seemingly bothered as at least then someone might notice what I was doing to myself and help. Or I might get killed. I couldn't help myself, even if I had known what to do or where to go.

*\*\*\* I can't believe how hard this is; just writing even a paragraph at the moment is taking me ages. It's like I feel sick in the deepest part of me because I am having to try and remember things I had either forgotten or just didn't want to remember again. There is a voice inside my head which is saying 'Stop Tim, don't write anymore' ... but I can't. I may not appreciate it now, but I know it will help to get it out and share it with others\*\*\**

So the girl had gone (even though we still managed to keep on torturing each other for years after) and I was left with my drug of choice: speed, and my frazzled head - not a good combination. With no one else to worry about, things started going a bit crazy. I was buying £250 bags, which is a lot of speed for just one person and this used to last me, if I could control it, about a month. I stopped eating, except for ice cream and yoghurts, stopped sleeping at night, and just kept on working all the hours I could. This was the start of the isolation my using caused, which was to increase in ferocity over the next few years. I look back on it now and that's where I ended up: alone and scared.

At this time, the amount I was using started to send me psychotic. I was so paranoid; I barricaded myself into my flat and listened to every sound expecting the police to come busting through the door at any moment. I remember one New Years Eve, I was home alone expecting my ex-girlfriend to come round to see me and she phoned to say she wouldn't be coming. I screamed and shouted at her, I cried and told her how ill I was and how I needed help. She wouldn't come because she was scared of how I was and the state I was in. I got off the phone and went mad, absolutely crazy, smashing the place up and everything in it. All the football trophies I had, I smashed them to pieces, I ripped up all the letters and cards she had given me, and at the end of that I got out a black permanent marker.

I started writing in a mad frenzy on myself, my arms and legs, and on the walls in the flat. I wrote the most depressing parts of my poems on the walls, long verses of them from top to bottom in my bedroom. On my body I wrote things I felt about myself, all horrible and terrible 'one words', really awful things to write about anyone, let alone yourself. At the end of it, I sat, head in hands rocking and crying

like there was no tomorrow and sticking as much speed down me as I could. Amidst the crying, rocking and drug taking, I was demonically laughing as if I was possessed. I was looking back, possessed by a desire to harm myself in ways which I wouldn't want to tell anyone about. But I am telling you because I'm told it helps to share with others. At this precise moment, it doesn't help - it hurts.

Where did this desire to inflict so much damage and harm to myself come from? It's hard to say for sure. I do know that I cared little for anything or anybody and certainly not for myself. If anyone else tried to tell me how much they cared for me, my reply was standard, 'I'm just a junkie, nothing more'. Truth be told, I really did feel like that. My self-worth and self-esteem were on the minus scale, well below zero. I had no sense of dignity or pride and lived every day with a mask created by drugs, which allowed me to 'try' and be something different to what I was. It also meant I could fool people some of the time. The real truth is I was fooling no one.

I left the writings on my walls for a long time afterwards; no one came around anyway except the girl I wanted back! Here's a tip, if you want someone to come back into your life and love you the best idea is not to have that kind of stuff on your wall! As I found out. She saw it all and stayed away after suggesting and helping me to re-paint the walls. She and I both knew the writing was on the wall for us as a couple and that was that. She had a lucky escape and I am glad she got out when she did.

My life continued quite the same for a while, day in day out. Speed, work, home, alone, watching TV and more drugs. I did go out occasionally but not much. I was really miserable to be with and never had anything good to say about anything or anyone.

Looking back I can see that I enjoyed wrapping myself up in relentless misery. If I was happy I questioned why and tore it to shreds. I think that I only felt comfortable with a doom and gloom mentality and all the trappings that brought. It seemed easier living with anger, resentment and self pity than it did just living with a smile and a positive outlook. If anyone put in a single positive I could double it with negatives and add twenty more. It's a question still open to debate whether this pain and misery fuelled my drug use or vice versa. It is fair to say that they ran hand in hand over that time. All I know is I was in pain. Cold, clinical, denied pain which started to eat into my soul. It's hard to describe my head looking back but I did write these poems at the time, which may help.

**No value**

I am worth nothing, I have no value  
Only in the coffin, where it all ends  
No tears at death, words all being said  
Empty of life, next to a hole in the earth.  
No rose on the lid, from one left behind  
Just the cold splash of rain and deep pain  
Prayers from one knowing nothing at all  
And the sound of dirt, on its short fall.

**Plea**

No-one cares, no-one shares  
They want me, when they want  
Not my want, not my needs.  
I can love but I hurt  
I can laugh but I cry  
And in time, I will die.

**Ending**

At the end it's only you  
Alone to face, what or who.  
Love in death, death in love  
At the end it's only you.  
What to feel despair or hope  
Taking with you, just a rope  
Or maybe a book of excuses  
What to feel, despair or hope.

Now this is going to come as a big surprise, but after this I stopped using for about seven or eight months. Yes, I know, sit down, have a tea and steady yourselves. Imagine what a shock it was for me!

How did I stop? Why did I stop? What changed? I don't really know to be sure; I was just tired of it all and was very bored of my mundane existence. I also had some help from a girl who became a good friend over that time. We both had problems and on-going issues and became close. So for months I lived a normal life, socialised more, went to work at normal times and actually took time off. I enjoyed it and even more surprising, I went to sleep every night. I was less miserable and started to laugh again. My life seemed to stabilise for a while. I never knew about NA meetings then or any other places you could go to get help for 'the illness'. I still didn't think I had a major problem at the time, certainly not an illness which I would have to learn to deal with for the rest of my life. I just thought I had had a problem for a while because I struggled to come to terms with a destructive relationship and catastrophic break-up. I never really thought about drugs during that time and then suddenly, it changed overnight and took hold once again.

We had a very big event day at work and a friend and I worked a long day. She finished and went home and I was left sorting out some odds and ends. Then I got a call from an old speed-using buddy who offered me some cocaine. It took a second to register and then I agreed. Within thirty minutes I had picked it up and was back at work.

Reality then kicked in about what I had done and how all that I had achieved within the last few months could go up in smoke if I took it. I phoned my friend and told her what I had done. She obviously knew about my past using and how bad I was then. We spoke for about half hour; she asked me where I was, what I was thinking and what was I going to do. The conversation went on and on for ages but she was only stalling me... in the time we were speaking she had turned her car around and driven back to where I was and walked in to my office still on the phone to me. She had come back to help me, to look after me and stop me doing it. It was a really beautiful thing for her to do and she stayed with me that night and I didn't take it and I was safe. At least for that night.

I re-paid her the next day by going home in the morning, retrieving the gram from where I had hidden it and doing it all in the space of two hours. I knew not why. The night before I had told her I had thrown it away, got rid of it and she believed me, trusted me to have done that, but I had not. Doing what I did tells me that I was an addict then, as I am now. If my mind was set, then nobody could ever stop me using, not even Superman and certainly not myself. With that one gram I was off and running again and I did not look back until three or four years later, when I walked through the doors of The Priory at Roehampton. But I am just fast forwarding, trying to brush over what happened between me and cocaine. I can't do that because my life and my story on cocaine needs to be told for all those it might help, and for me to remember where it took me. It's not pretty and it will hurt to write but I have to tell it.

See you next time.

Tim Tweedy